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ABSTRACT

The five school systems of Louisiana Educational Planning Region V formed a consortium to establish a vocational assessment center for high school special needs students. Assessment data would be used by the Individual Education Plan committee to place students in vocational education courses. A study was conducted to rate the performance of students who were placed in accordance with vocational assessment recommendations. The population for the study consisted of the 201 special needs students enrolled in vocational education classes who had received a vocational assessment prior to placement. Data were compiled on the basis of students who were placed according to vocational assessment recommendations and those placed in areas other than those recommended. Results of the study showed a significant difference in 11 areas in favor of students who were placed according to the recommendations: effort, attitude toward work, ability to get along with others in class, taking directions in class, appropriate behavior on the job, ability to accept supervision of the instructor, attention span and ability to complete a job, ability to accept boredom and repetition on the job, quality of work produced, overall performance, and grade average. The study concluded that placement of students in vocational areas recommended as a result of vocational assessment and successful performance ratings appeared to be systematically related. (KC)

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FORWARD

The Region V Vocational Assessment Center was established through a five-parish consortium consisting of Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, and Jefferson Davis Parish school systems. Calcasieu Parish School Board serves as fiscal agent for the program. The vocational assessment program was developed in 1982 to expand vocational education opportunities for special needs students in Educational Planning Region V.

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I. INTRODUCTION

During the last ten years, school systems have increasingly recognized the importance of vocational assessment prior to placement of special needs students into vocational programs. The passage of Public Law 98-524 in 1984 mandated vocational assessment for any handicapped, disadvantaged, or limited English proficient student who enrolls in vocational education programs. Public school systems are rapidly responding to this mandate.

The immediate goal of vocational assessment in an educational setting generally is to define vocational interests, strengths, and limitations to assist in the career planning process for each student. Vocational assessment also emphasizes the identification of appropriate services which are likely to facilitate the vocational development of the student. It is then possible to predict the likely functional outcomes which will occur as the direct result of vocational assessment services.

Background Information of the Study

The five school systems of Louisiana Educational Planning Region V, with a total student enrollment of 54,625, joined together in a consortium arrangement in 1982 to establish the Region V Vocational Assessment Center. The purpose of the center was to

provide vocational assessment services for high school special needs students. Vocational assessment data would then be used by the student, his parents, educators, and other members of the IEP (Individual Education Plan) Committee to make decisions when planning the student's vocational training program.

Funding for the program has come from several sources including the Louisiana State Department of Education, vocational and special education divisions, local school district funds, and the local agency administering Job Training Partnership Act funds. The assessment center has a staff of eight people, including a unit coordinator, job placement coordinator, two vocational evaluators, two testing technicians, and two clerks.

This study was conducted by the vocational assessment staff of Louisiana Educational Planning Region V. The main thrust of the study in regard to student placement in vocational curricula dealt with rating the performance of students who were placed in accordance with vocational assessment report recommendations and rating the performance of students placed in areas other than those recommended in vocational assessment reports. Performance was rated by vocational education teachers.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Statement of the Problem

Vocational assessment services were first available to identified special needs students enrolled in high schools in

Educational Planning Region V during the 82-83 operational period of the Region V Vocational Assessment Center. None of the students who were enrolled in vocational classes at that time had received vocational assessment services, therefore, placements in vocational classes were made on the same basis as regular students. Vocational assessment data are now available for use in making vocational placement decisions for special needs students. Over 1,500 students received a Level II vocational assessment as of April 30, 1986.

The first objective of the study was to determine appropriateness of program placement recommendations made the year prior to student placement in vocational programs. In making this determination, some degree of predictive validity of training recommendations could be ascertained.

A second objective of the study was to find out whether there was a difference in performance of students placed in vocational classes recommended in the vocational assessment report and those placed in vocational classes other than recommended in the vocational assessment report.

III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Sources of Data

The 1985-86 follow-up study included 498 special needs students in the five school systems comprising Educational Planning Region V who had received a vocational assessment the previous school year. Forty percent of those who received vocational assessments were placed in vocational programs, thirty percent were placed in school programs other than vocational, and thirty percent were in other categories such as graduated from school, dropped out of school, exited from special education programs, entered adult education, moved, were expelled, were deceased, became homebound, or were transferred to a group home.

The following table shows the status of the individuals included in the study one year subsequent to their having received vocational assessment.

TABLE I

STATUS OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS IN LOUISIANA EDUCATIONAL PLANNING REGION V ONE YEAR FOLLOWING VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Status or Program	Number	Percent
In vocational classes	201	40.4%
In school programs other than vocational	151	30.3%
Dropped out of school	85	17.1%
Moved	26	5.2%
Graduated from school	24	4.8%
Exited special education	3	.6%
Entered adult education	2	.4%
Expelled	2	.4%
Deceased	2	.4%
Homebound	1	.2%
Transferred to group home	1	.2%
Total	498	100%

The population for this study consisted of the 201 special needs students who were enrolled in vocational education classes and who had received a vocational assessment prior to placement. The student population consisted of 113 Learning Disabled, 25 Mild Mentally Retarded, 59 Slow Learners or Educationally Handicapped, 2 Behavior Disordered, 1 Partially Seeing, and 1 Deaf.

Each student received a Level I and II vocational assessment as recommended by Louisiana State Department of Education's proposed vocational assessment model. The Level II vocational assessment consisted of:

1) Apticom computerized vocational interest inventory and multiple aptitude test battery
2) A parent, teacher, and student interview
3) A color discrimination test
4) A review of special education data

A small number of students received a Level III vocational assessment consisting of Level I and II vocational assessment information, VITAS or VIEWS work samples, VALPAR work samples, and/or situational assessment prior to placement.

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument was designed for vocational education teachers to rate student performance in various categories, including "Overall Performance".

Each vocational education teacher rated student performance on a scale of 1 to 6, with a rating of 1 being "very poor" and a rating of 6 being "excellent".

The data collection instrument contained a description of twelve performance areas. These performance areas were: effort, attitude toward work, ability to get along with others in the class, ability to take directions in class, appropriate behavior on the job, ability to accept supervision of the instructor, ability to complete a job and attention span, ability to accept boredom and repetition on the job, attendance in class, quality of work produced, overall performance, and grade average in the class. Each respondent circled one response on the rating scale for each performance item.

Collection of Data

During March 1986, lists of students who had received a vocational assessment during the previous school year were sent to secondary counselors in the five parishes. A cover letter was attached, requesting information on vocational class placements of these students and the names of each vocational education teacher teaching those classes.

During the first week of April 1986, data collection instruments were distributed to all vocational teachers teaching special needs students who had received a vocational assessment a year prior to placement.

Analysis of Data

The data provided by vocational education teachers were compiled on the basis of students who were placed according to vocational assessment recommendations and those placed in areas

other than recommended. A chi square test (X^2) for significant difference was applied to all performance ratings for each group. The chi square test (X^2) was used to estimate the likelihood that some factor other than chance accounted for the difference between the success or lack of success of the two groups.

Table II shows the chi square values for ratings of students by vocational education teachers who were placed in accordance with vocational assessment report recommendations and ratings of students placed in areas other than recommended in the vocational assessment report.

FIVE PARISH REGION

SUMMARY REPORT OF INFORMATION

REGION V VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT FOLLOW-UP STUDY

SPRING 1986

TABLE II

Chi Square Values for Ratings of Students by Vocational Education Teachers Who Were Placed in Accordance With Vocational Assessment Report Recommendations and Ratings of Students Placed in Areas Other Than Recommended in the Vocational Assessment Report

Item	Placed According to Recommendations						Placed in Areas Other Than Recommended						X^2 Value	Level of Significance
	Very Poor fo fe	Poor fo fe	Fair fo fe	Good fo fe	Very Good fo fe	Excellent fo fe	Very Poor fo fe	Poor fo fe	Fair fo fe	Good fo fe	Very Good fo fe	Excellent fo fe		
Effort	2 - 7	3 - 5	33-41	49-45	45 - 38	21 - 17	7 - 2	4 - 2	21-13	10-14	5 - 12	1 - 5	36.36	.01
Attitude	2 - 6	2 - 6	27-35	52-46	47 - 40	23 - 20	6 - 2	6 - 2	19-11	8-14	5 - 12	4 - 6	38.77	.01
Getting Along	0 - 1	5 - 7	15-20	61-62	51 - 46	21 - 17	1 - 0	4 - 2	11-6	21-20	10 - 15	1 - 5	15.40	.01
Taking Directions	1 - 5	9 - 13	40-49	60-50	34 - 29	9 - 7	6 - 2	8 - 4	24-15	6-16	4 - 9	0 - 2	38.04	.01
Behavior	0 - 3	10 - 12	22-29	49-46	53 - 49	17 - 13	4 - 1	6 - 4	16-9	11-14	11 - 15	0 - 4	27.93	.01
Accept Supervision	0 - 4	6 - 8	13-21	51-50	53 - 47	30 - 24	5 - 1	4 - 2	14-6	15-16	9 - 15	1 - 7	46.11	.01
Attention Span	4 - 10	8 - 13	40-43	54-49	38 - 30	9 - 8	9 - 3	9 - 4	17-14	10-15	2 - 10	1 - 2	35.96	.01
Accept Boredom	1 - 6	13 - 17	41-45	52-47	35 - 30	9 - 7	7 - 2	9 - 5	18-14	10-15	4 - 9	0 - 2	30.69	.01
Attendance	2 - 3	3 - 5	20-21	49-45	42 - 43	37 - 37	2 - 1	4 - 2	7-6	10-14	14 - 13	11 - 11	5.95	N/A
Work Quality	3 - 8	11 - 17	47-48	57-48	30 - 28	5 - 4	8 - 3	11 - 5	16-15	6-15	7 - 9	0 - 1	29.79	.01
Overall Performance	0 - 5	8 - 11	42-47	53-49	39 - 33	10 - 8	6 - 1	7 - 4	20-15	11-15	4 - 10	0 - 2	43.86	.01
Grade Average	1 - 1	2 - 8	18-24	62-61	55 - 46	14 - 11	0 - 0	10 - 3	13-7	18-19	5 - 14	1 - 4	38.16	.01

IV. RESULTS

There was significant difference at or beyond .01 level of confidence in the following performance areas in favor of ratings of students who were placed according to vocational assessment report recommendations: (1) effort, (2) attitude toward work, (3) ability to get along with others in the class, (4) taking directions in the class, (5) appropriate behavior on the job, (6) ability to accept supervision of the instructor, (7) attention span and ability to complete a job, (8) ability to accept boredom and repetition on the job, (9) quality of work produced, (10) overall performance, and (11) grade average.

There was no statistically significant difference at the .01 or .05 level of confidence in ratings of students in the performance area of attendance. The chi square (X^2) findings are illustrated in Table II.

The results indicated that placement of students in vocational areas recommended as a result of vocational assessment and successful performance ratings appeared to be systematically related, rather than occurring by pure chance.

V. EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Matching student's skills, abilities, and interests to vocational curricula is commonly believed to be necessary for success of special needs students in vocational training programs.

Special needs students had a significantly higher overall performance record in vocational classes when they were placed in accordance with their assessed interests and abilities. One educational implication of this finding is that the vocational education needs of special needs students may be better served if each student's interests and abilities are determined prior to placement in a vocational program.

A second educational implication is that vocational assessment data appear to provide a strongly reliable means of forecasting probability of success when the student is placed in recommended program areas.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study and may be considered by those school personnel charged with the responsibility of a vocational assessment program.

1. Students should receive a vocational assessment prior to vocational education placement -- probably at the ninth grade level if vocational education begins at the tenth grade level.
2. Vocational assessment information should be integrated into the student's multidisciplinary reports.
3. Vocational assessment information should be available to vocational teachers, counselors, principals and others involved in educational placement decisions.
4. Continuous review of placements should be carried out in order to determine appropriateness of placement recommendations.

VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

FOLLOW-UP STUDY

1985-86

STUDENT'S NAME _____

VOCATIONAL CLASS _____

SCHOOL _____ DATE _____

For vocational education teacher or special education teacher:
Please circle the answer that best describes this student's performance in your class.

1. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS STUDENT'S EFFORT IN YOUR CLASS?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

2. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS STUDENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD WORK IN YOUR CLASS?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

3. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS STUDENT'S ABILITY TO GET ALONG WITH OTHERS IN THIS CLASS?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

4. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS STUDENT'S ABILITY TO TAKE DIRECTIONS IN YOUR CLASS?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

5. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS STUDENT FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR ON THE JOB?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

6. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS STUDENT'S ABILITY TO ACCEPT SUPERVISION OF THE INSTRUCTOR IN YOUR CLASS?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

7. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS STUDENT'S ATTENTION SPAN OR ABILITY TO COMPLETE A JOB?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

8. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS STUDENT'S ABILITY TO ACCEPT BOREDOM AND REPETITION ON THE JOB?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

9. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS STUDENT'S ATTENDANCE IN YOUR CLASS THIS YEAR?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

10. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS STUDENT'S QUALITY OF WORK PRODUCED IN YOUR CLASS?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

11. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS STUDENT'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN YOUR CLASS?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

12. WHAT IS THIS STUDENT'S GRADE AVERAGE IN YOUR CLASS AT THIS TIME?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Unable to do work	Very Poor	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
	U	D	C	B	A

13. HAVE YOU READ A VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORT ON ONE OR MORE OF YOUR STUDENTS?

___1. YES ___2. NO